

THE RUBBER BAND RUNNER CHAMPION



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Mr. R spends his time teaching the young rubber band runners in Letter People Land.

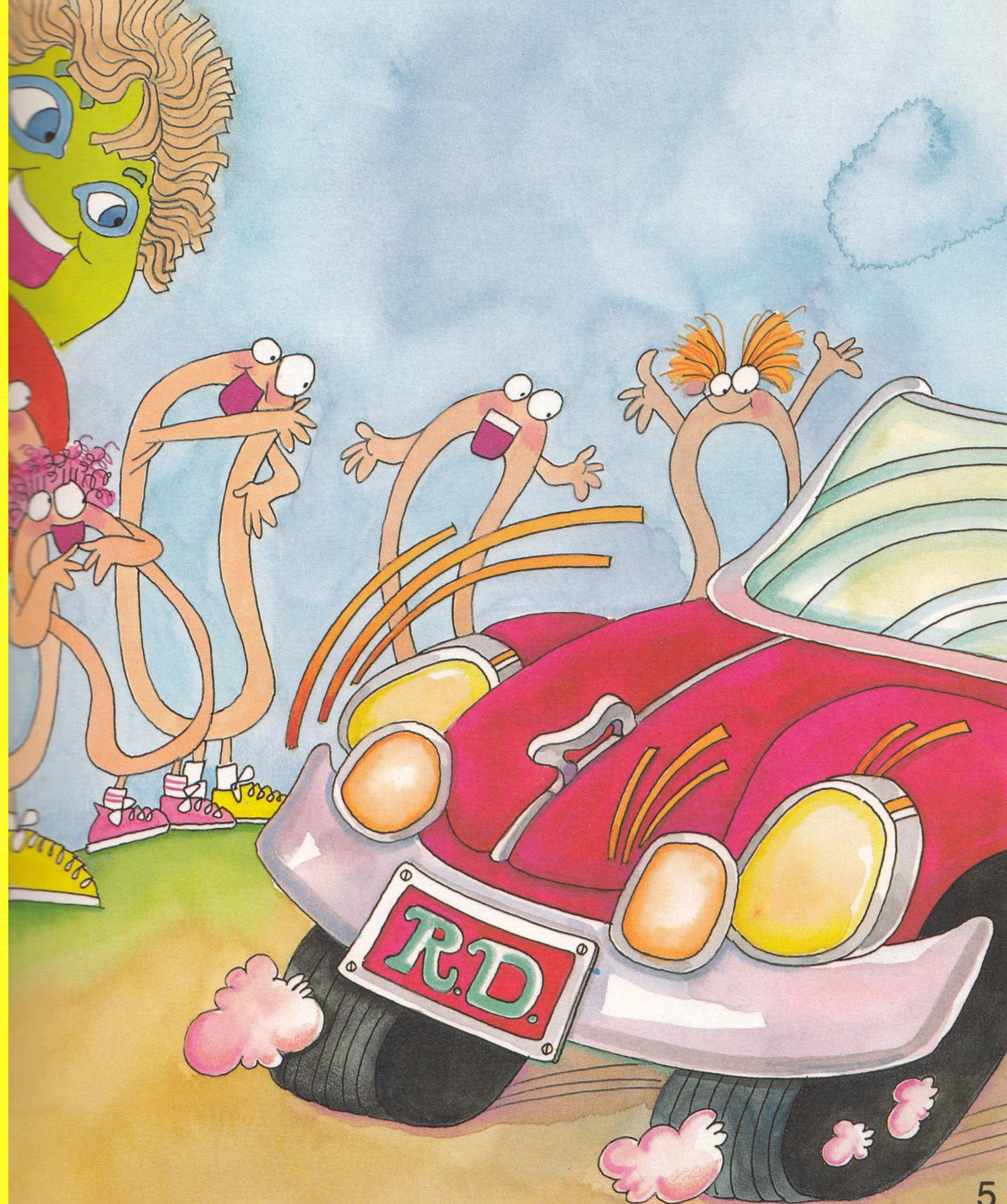
One day Ring-Around asks Mr. R an important question:
“Mr. R, what is a champion?”



“A champion is someone who wins,” says Mr. R.
“But a champion should be more than just a winner.”
“I don’t understand,” says Ring-Around Rubber Band.
“I have an idea,” says Mr. R.
“Razzle-Dazzle, the champion rubber band runner,
is coming to our rubber band reunion tomorrow.
Watch the way Razzle-Dazzle acts.
Then you’ll know what I mean when I say a champion
should be more than just a winner.”



The next day Ring-Around Rubber Band is very excited. "I'll watch everything Razzle-Dazzle does," she thinks. "Then I'll know what Mr. R means when he says a champion should be more than just a winner." All the rubber bands get to the reunion early. But Razzle-Dazzle is very, very late. "I hope nothing is wrong," says Mr. R. Suddenly everyone hears the roar of an engine and the screech of brakes. Razzle-Dazzle has arrived.



Razzle-Dazzle is driving a red convertible sports car. He is wearing a ruffled shirt with rhinestones on it. He has running medals pinned all over his shirt.

“Razzle-Dazzle, I was worried because you were so late,” says Mr. R.

“I am always late,” replies Razzle-Dazzle.

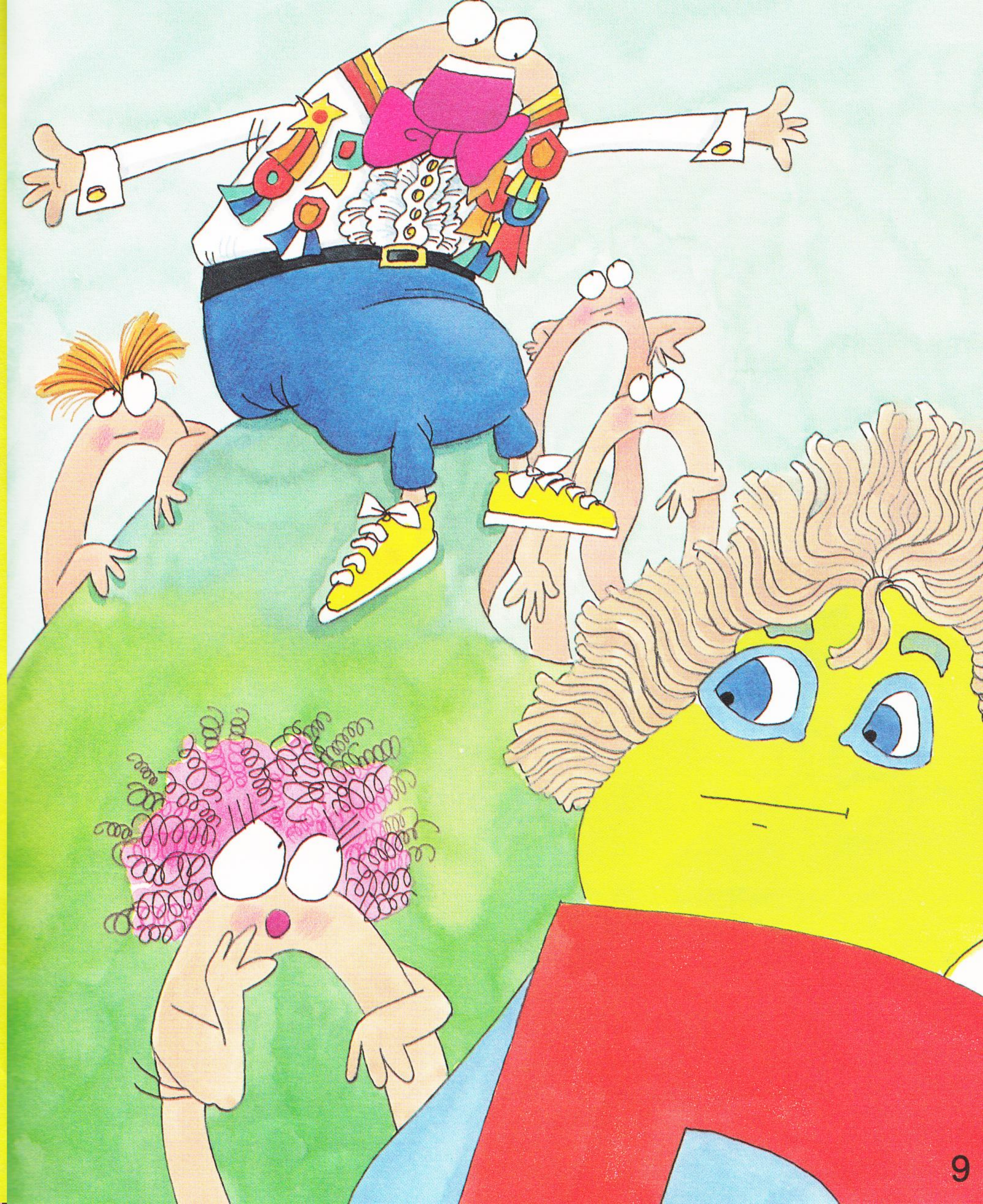
“People must wait for champions.”

“Mr. R,” whispers Ring-Around Rubber Band, “is that the way champions are supposed to act?”

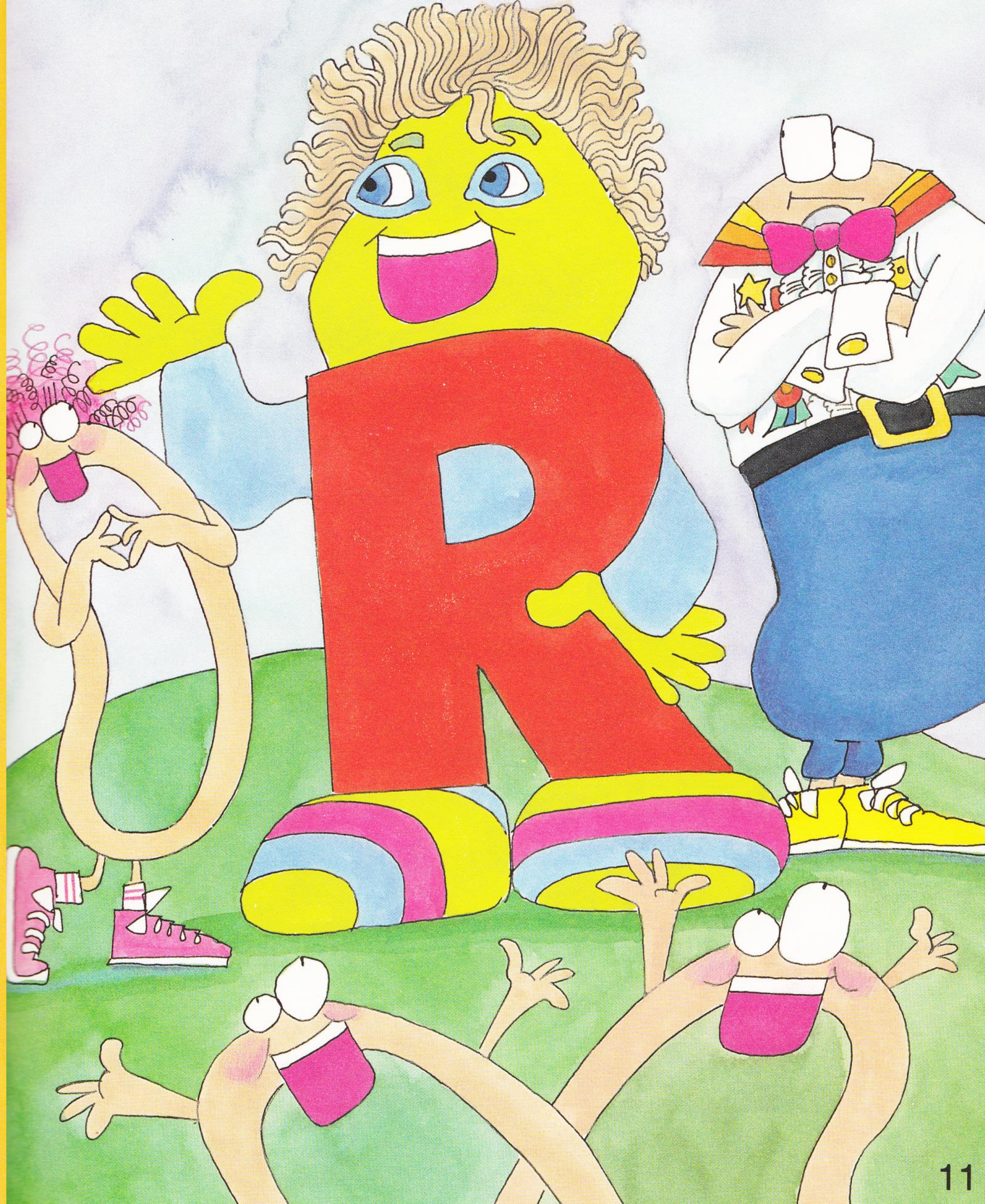
“No,” says Mr. R, “champions should not think their time is more important than other people’s. They should not make people wait for them.”



“Razzle-Dazzle,” says Mr. R,
“Ring-Around Rubber Band wants to meet you.
She wants to find out all about champions.”
“I have no time now,” says Razzle-Dazzle.
“I have not been to Letter People Land for many years.
I have to show everyone all my medals.
I have to tell everyone how great I am.”
Razzle-Dazzle talks and talks about himself.
“Mr. R,” whispers Ring-Around Rubber Band,
“is that the way champions are supposed to act?”
“No,” says Mr. R, “champions should not feel they are
more important than everyone else.”



Mr. R tells the rubber bands he has a surprise.
“I have planned some running races,” he says.
“The first race is an obstacle race.
The runners must run over boxes, through hoops,
and in and out of tires.”
“That race sounds like fun,” laugh the rubber bands.
“It sounds ridiculous to me,” says Razzle-Dazzle.
“Razzle-Dazzle, Mr. R worked hard planning this race,”
say the other rubber bands.
“Let’s run and have a good time.”



Razzle-Dazzle gets grumpy.

“You run,” he says to the other rubber bands.

“I’ll sit and shine my medals.”

“Mr. R,” whispers Ring-Around Rubber Band,
“I don’t think champions should act this way.”

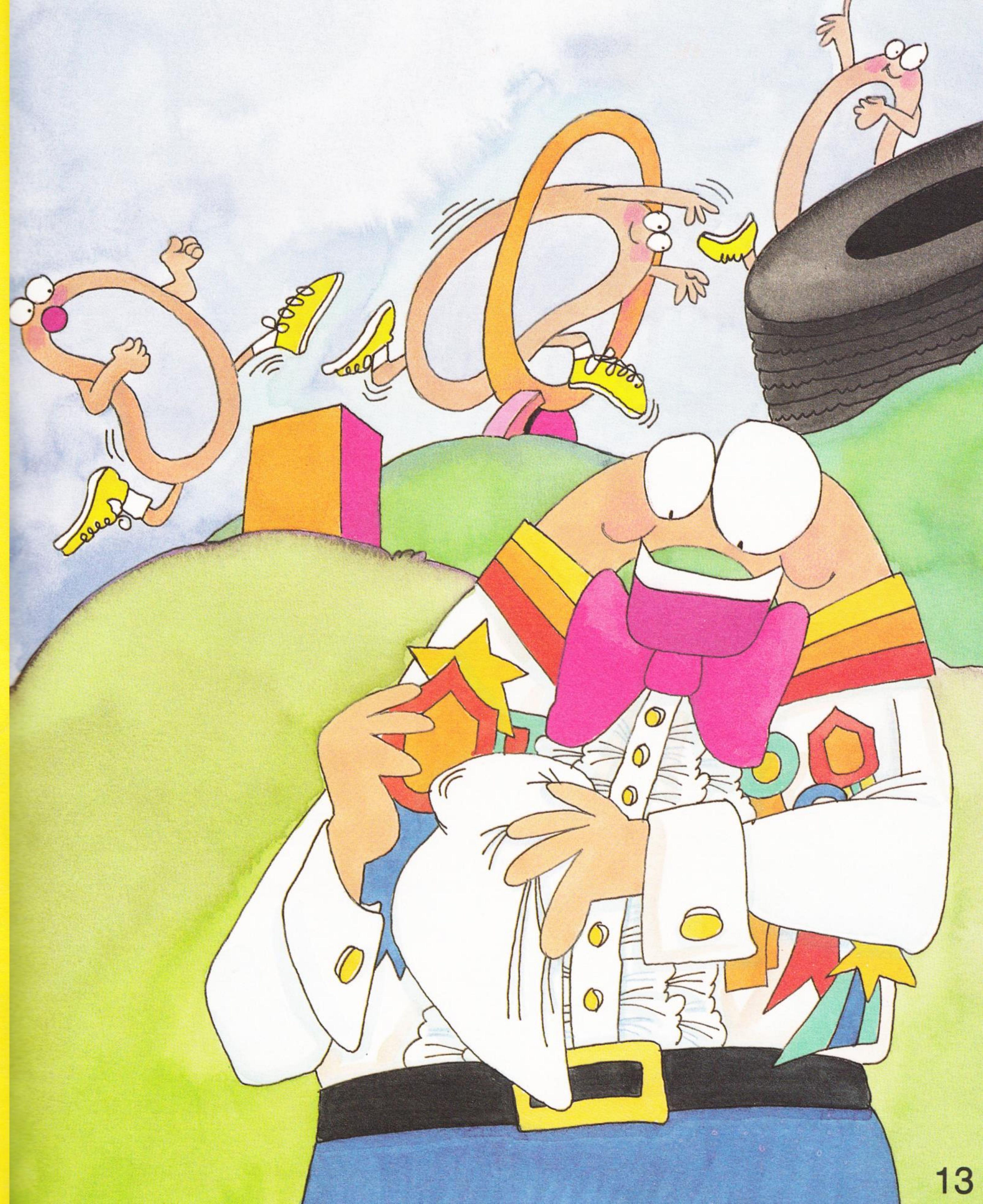
“You are right,” says Mr. R.

“Champions should not get grumpy
because they can’t have everything their own way.
Let’s watch the race.”

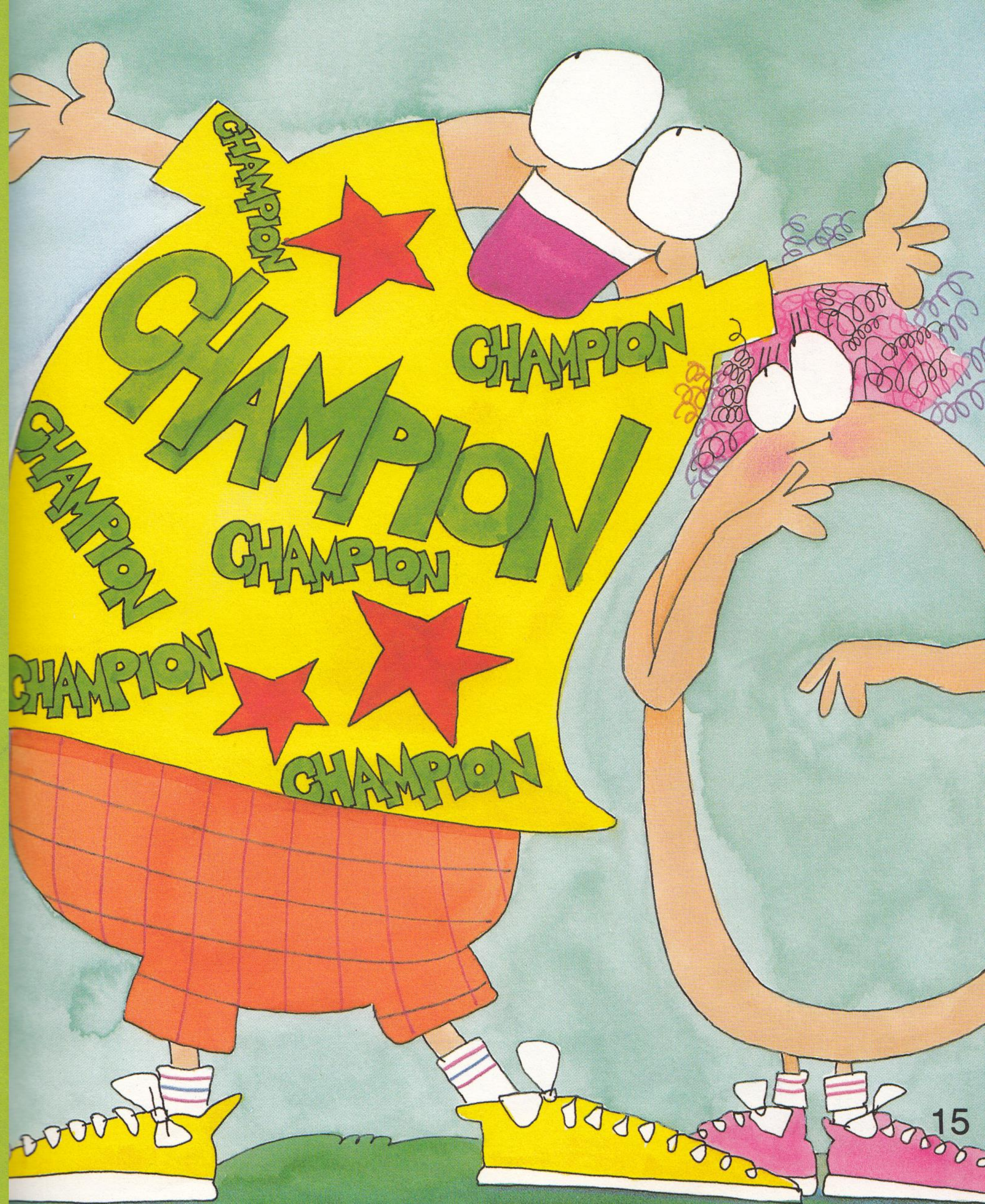
The rubber bands enjoy running the obstacle race.

Razzle-Dazzle doesn’t even watch.

Instead, he shines his medals.



“The next race will be a relay race,” announces Mr. R.
“I’ll run in a relay race,” says Razzle-Dazzle.
“Good,” says Mr. R,
“but please put on running clothes.”
The rubber band runners wait for Razzle-Dazzle
to change his clothes.
Finally he is ready.
Ring-Around Rubber Band looks and looks
at Razzle-Dazzle’s running shirt.
“Why is the word ‘CHAMPION’ printed all over it?”
she wonders.



“Mr. R,” whispers Ring-Around Rubber Band,
“should champions have the word ‘CHAMPION’
printed all over their running shirts?”
“No,” says Mr. R, “champions shouldn’t show off.
Razzle-Dazzle wins many running races,
but I’m beginning to wonder if he is a real champion.”
Before Ring-Around Rubber Band can ask
another question, she hears Razzle-Dazzle shout,
“Let’s pick teams for the relay race right now.
A champion shouldn’t be kept waiting.”
“Razzle-Dazzle is not being very nice,”
thinks Ring-Around.
“I don’t like the way Razzle-Dazzle acts.”



“I know a fair way to pick teams,” says Mr. R.
He gets many pieces of paper.
He draws a shape on each piece.
“I’ll put these papers in a hat,” says Mr. R.
“Each runner will pick a piece of paper from the hat.
Everyone who picks the same shape
will be on the same team.”
“That *is* a fair way to pick teams,”
say the rubber bands.
They each pick a piece of paper.



Razzle-Dazzle looks at the rubber bands on his team.

"I don't like my team," says Razzle-Dazzle.

"Let's pick the papers again."

The runners on Razzle-Dazzle's team look sad.

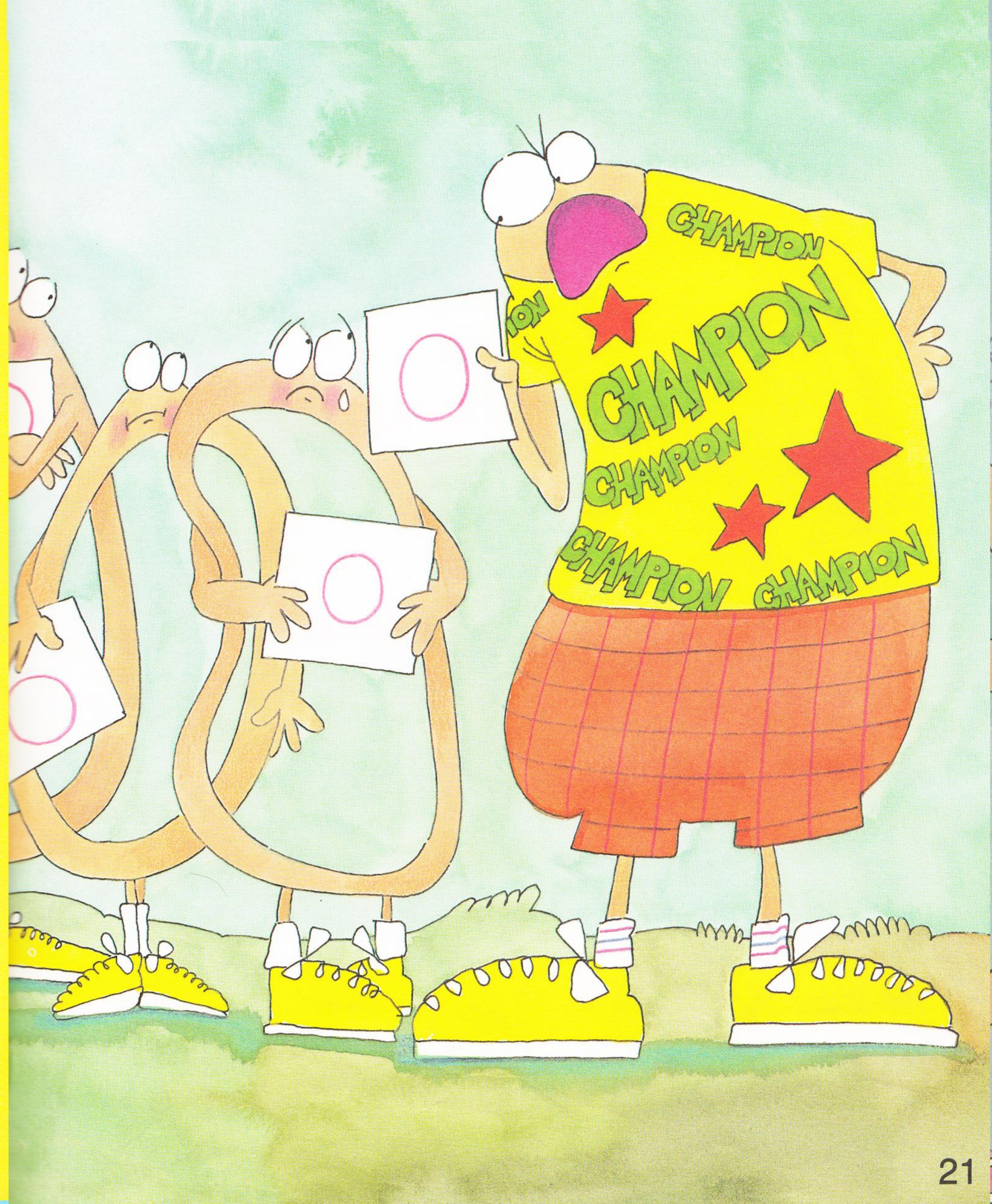
"Mr. R," whispers Ring-Around Rubber Band,

"Razzle-Dazzle shouldn't say he wants to pick another team."

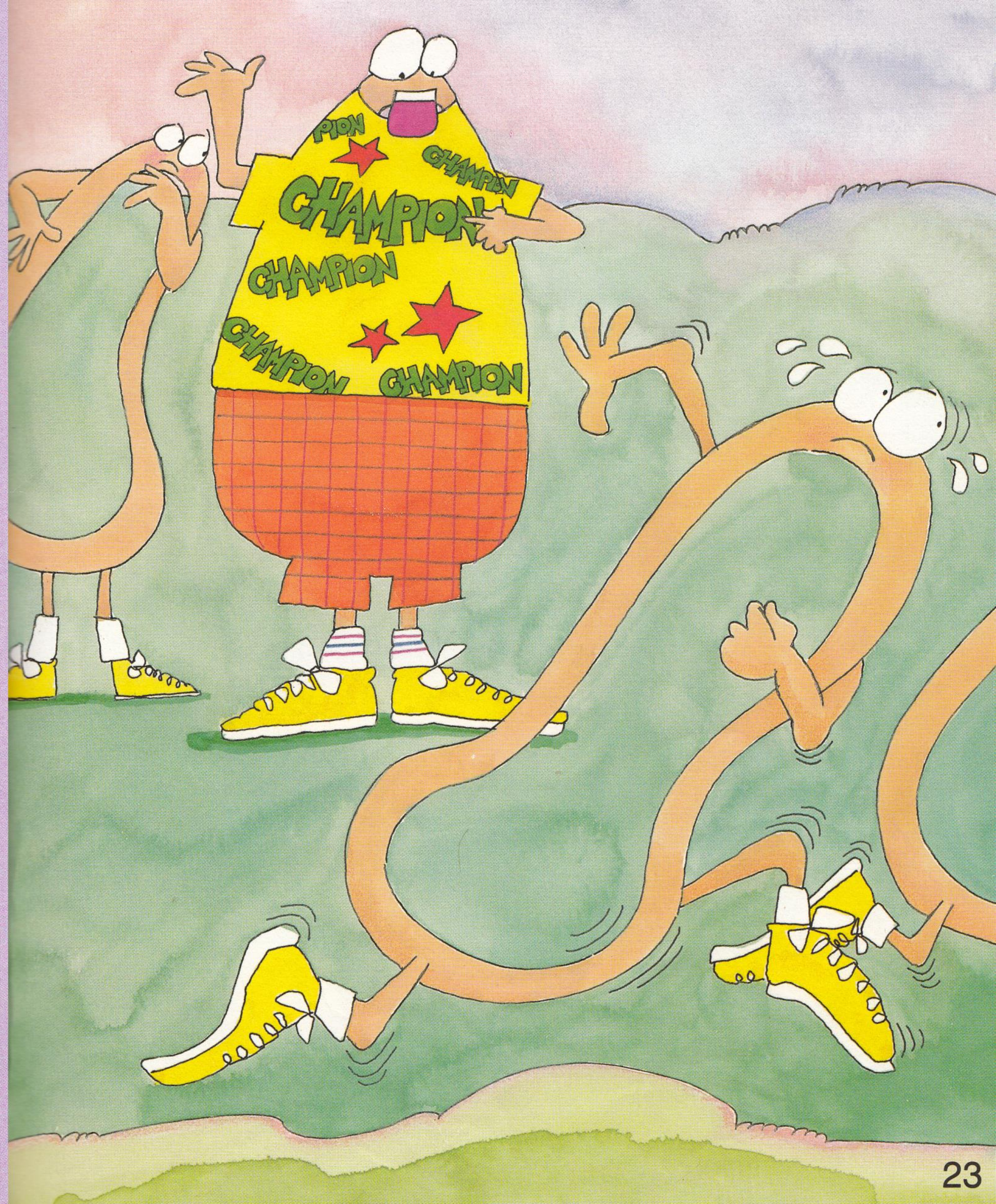
"You are right," says Mr. R.

"Champions should follow the same rules as everyone else."

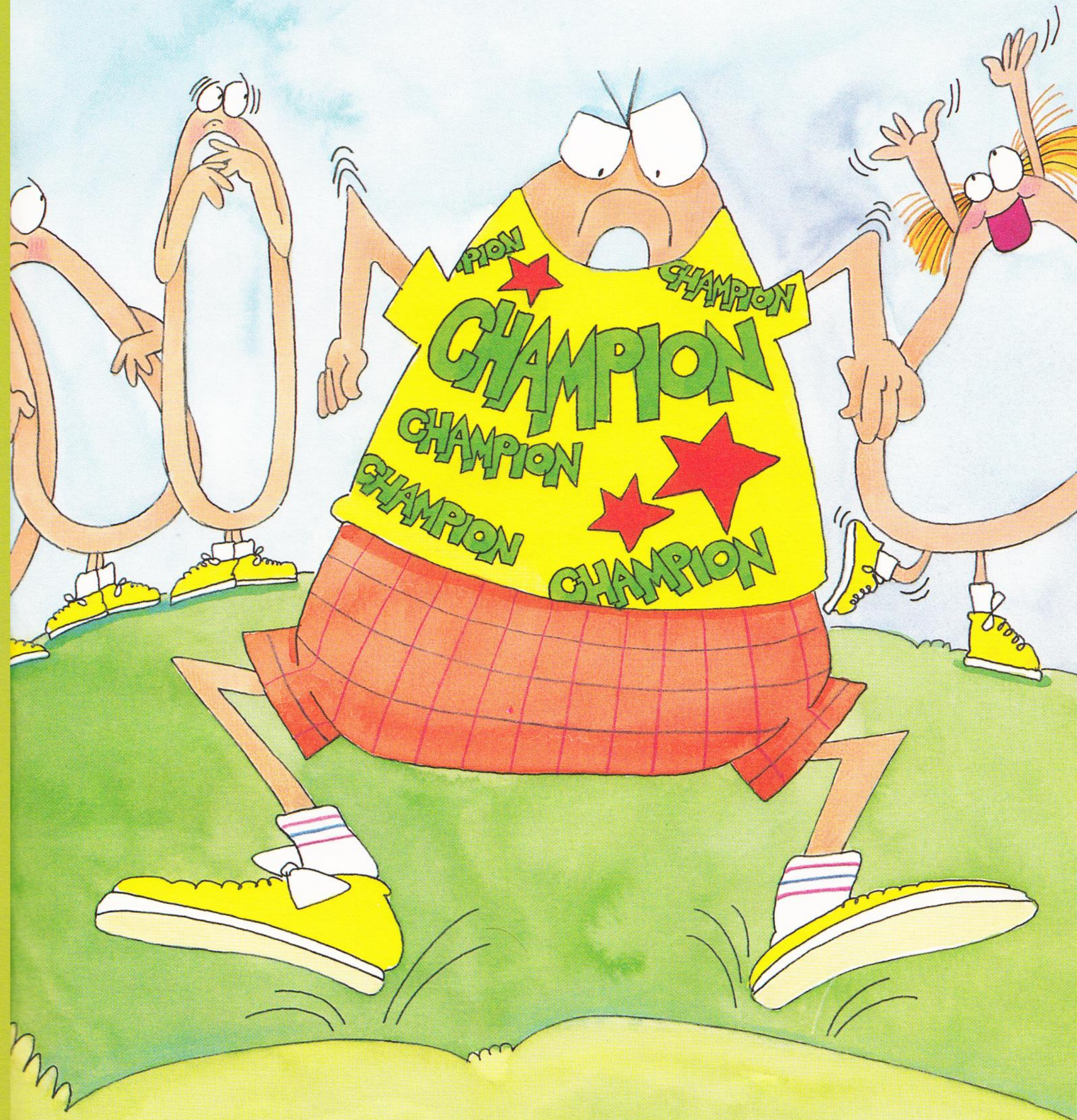
"If I were a champion, I wouldn't hurt my teammates' feelings," says Ring-Around.



Mr. R talks to Razzle-Dazzle.
Finally Razzle-Dazzle agrees to run with his team.
Razzle-Dazzle decides he will be
the last runner on his team.
The relay race starts.
Razzle-Dazzle's team is losing.
“Don't worry,” says Razzle-Dazzle.
“You can't lose if I am on your team.”
But Razzle-Dazzle's team gets farther
and farther behind.



Finally it is Razzle-Dazzle's turn to run. Razzle-Dazzle runs very fast. He runs past many of the other runners. But one runner is so far ahead, Razzle-Dazzle cannot catch up. Razzle-Dazzle's team loses the relay race. Razzle-Dazzle stamps his feet and shouts, "I lost because I had slow runners on my team."



“Mr. R,” whispers Ring-Around Rubber Band,
“that is a terrible way for a champion to act.”

“You are right,” says Mr. R.

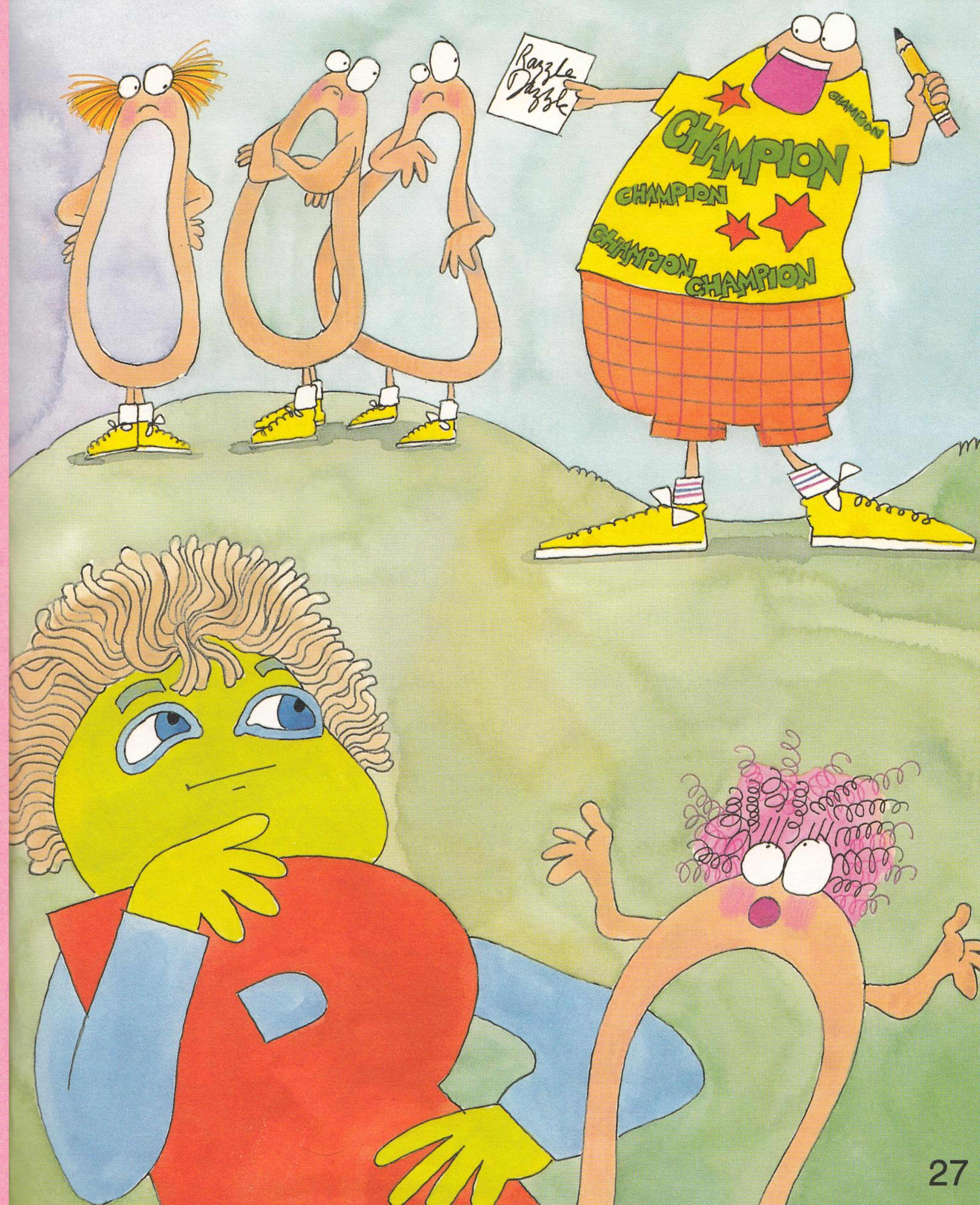
“Champions shouldn’t blame anyone
if their team loses.”

Suddenly Mr. R and Ring-Around Rubber Band hear
Razzle-Dazzle calling to the other rubber bands.

“I’ll sign autographs now,” says Razzle-Dazzle.

No one wants his autograph.

Razzle-Dazzle goes over to Ring-Around.



“Ring-Around,” says Razzle-Dazzle, “I am very busy, but I’ll talk to you now.

Tell me, what do you want to do when you grow up?”

“I want to win running races,” says Ring-Around.

“You want to be a champion, the way I am,” smiles Razzle-Dazzle.

“No,” says Ring-Around, “I don’t want to be the kind of champion you are.

I want to be a champion who cares about winning races but who also cares about other people.

That’s what a real champion is to me.”

Razzle-Dazzle gets angry.

He gets into his car and zooms away.



Razzle-Dazzle continues to win running races.
But he never learns how to be a real champion.
One day Ring-Around starts winning races.
She is more than just a winner.
She is a real champion.

